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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004208

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CODEL REED VISITS PM JAFARI

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

PM optimistic about the referendum

1. (SBU) On October 11, Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari told Senators Jack Reed (R-RI) and Chris Dodd (D-CT) that he is optimistic that the constitution referendum will take place on time and will pass without issue. Jaafari added that he expects widespread voter turnout that will include Sunni participation. He added that the majority of Sunnis in Iraq are good people who want the democratic process to move forward. Jaafari stated that Iraq's leadership has demonstrated its flexibility and willingness to include Sunnis by entertaining last minute changes to the draft constitution. He applauded Embassy Baghdad's efforts to bridge the gaps and tirelessly facilitate meetings between the various sides. Jaafari told the Codel that this constitution must be adopted so Iraqis can have the democratic opportunity to develop it further.

No Timetable for MNFI Troop Withdrawal

2. (C) Jafari stated that there could be no timetable for MNFI troop withdrawal because no one can predict the end to the war on terrorism. He did cite two indicators that would lend serious thought to troop withdrawal: development of the political process and improved performance of Iraqi troops and police.

No Civil War

3. (C) Jafari dismissed speculation that Iraq is headed toward the brink of civil war. He said that while it would appear that Iraq is in the midst of a civil war with entities using terrorist tactics, but that most Shia and Sunnis peacefully interact. He added that the new generation of Iraqis does not only view relationships along sectarian divides. He also claimed that Shia leadership would not enter into a civil war because it is the Shi'a who will benefit most from a peaceful and democratic society.

Iranian Influence in Iraq

4. (C) Jafari expressed Iraq's desire to have good relations with all neighboring countries, and called growing Iranian influence a fact of geography. He reminded the Codel that during the Saddam era, Iran provided refuge to the many in the opposition. Jaafari said that as long as Iran respects Iraq's sovereignty, no red line would be crossed and he welcomes the interaction.

5. (U) CODEL Reed did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.
Khalilzad